



Federal Bureau of Investigation



United States Attorney's Office
District of Arizona

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For Information Contact Public Affairs
MANNY TARANGO
Telephone: (602) 514-7625
Cell: (602) 525-2681

FBI TASK FORCE CATCHES SERIAL BANK ROBBER “HOTHEAD BANDIT” BASED ON SHARP EYE OF PEORIA POLICE

PHOENIX—A federal grand jury in Phoenix returned a 25-count indictment yesterday against Timothy John Kestle, 55, of Litchfield Park, Ariz., charging him with 13 counts of Armed Bank Robbery and 12 counts of possessing or using a firearm during the commission of the bank robberies.

The indictment alleges that defendant committed 13 bank robberies in Phoenix, Glendale, Peoria, Chandler, Litchfield Park, and Goodyear from August 2009 through April 2010. In the first armed bank robbery, the indictment alleges that Kestle threatened to use a gun against the tellers. In the following 12 armed bank robberies, the indictment alleges that Kestle pointed a gun at the tellers or showed them his gun while ordering them to open their cash drawers and give him money. Oftentimes he would rob one teller, and move along to another teller at the same bank, asking for “50's and 100's.” Kestle wore a baseball hat and sunglasses during the bank robberies. In two of the first few bank robberies, Kestle wore a navy blue baseball cap with red and orange flames outlining the bill, inspiring the moniker “Hothead Bandit.”

On June 7, 2010, an alert Peoria Police Sergeant saw a truck parked outside a bank consistent with the truck agents knew was his. The sergeant stopped the truck after observing a civil traffic violation. When the sergeant made contact with the driver of the truck, the driver appeared to be the “Hothead Bandit” depicted in FBI bulletins as the suspect who robbed 13 banks in approximately 10 months. The sergeant arrested him and took him into custody. Agents have secured 12 positive identifications of Kestle from victim tellers and witnesses.

“I want to thank the Peoria Police Department, in particular the sergeant who spotted the defendant waiting outside a local bank. The FBI’s Violent Crime/Bank Robbery Task Force has been extremely successful in bringing bank robbers to justice,” stated U.S. Attorney Dennis K. Burke. “When federal, state, and local law enforcement create partnerships to target specific crimes, Arizona’s local communities benefit.”

FBI Special Agent in Charge Nathan T. Gray, Phoenix Division stated that, “The arrest of Timothy Kestle by the FBI’s Bank Robbery Task Force is another fine example of the commitment and professionalism of task force members who represent their respective law enforcement agencies. Our law enforcement partners have been instrumental in the effectiveness of the bank robbery task force in its efforts to reduce bank robberies in the Valley. In addition, we are grateful to the Peoria Police Department for its fine work in detecting this defendant’s vehicle near a bank.”

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A conviction for Armed Bank Robbery carries a maximum penalty of 25 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine or both. A conviction for Possessing a Firearm in Furtherance of an Armed Bank Robbery carries a maximum of life in prison. An indictment is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The FBI has partnered with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, the Mesa Police Department, the Phoenix Police Department, the Scottsdale Police Department, the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Maricopa County Attorney's Office to form the Violent Crime/Bank Robbery Task Force in order to investigate, arrest and seek prosecution of those responsible for robbing banks in the Valley. The prosecution in this case is being handled by Jennifer E. Green, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR 10-921-PHX-SRB
RELEASE NUMBER: 2010-143(Kestle)

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